



JULY 90 40c

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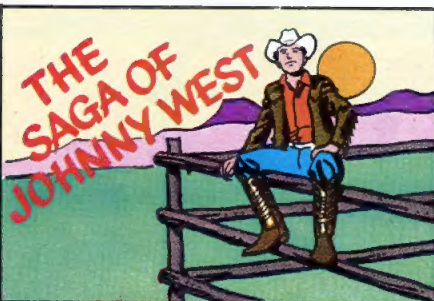
TM

SHANG-CHI FACES DEATH IN CHINATOWN

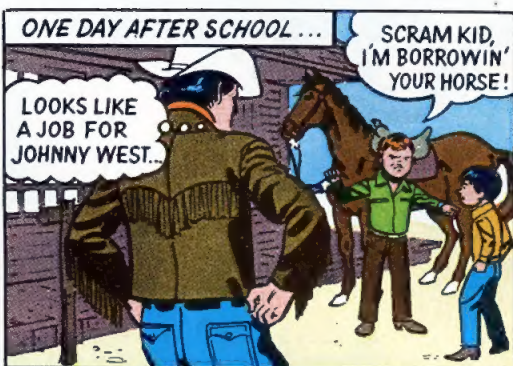
WALLY

ZECK / DAY

SPIDER-MAN



JOHNNY WEST, WEARING HIS ACME BOOTS, KEEPS AN EYE OUT FOR KIDS IN TROUBLE.



"Call me Shang-Chi, as my father did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: that my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' and that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung fu. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on Earth... and that to honor him would bring nothing but disaster to the spirit of my name."

Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

TRIUMPHS OF THE FLESH

"PIER 23, DAWN: AGAIN FU MANCHU HAS APPARENTLY GONE TO HIS DEATH... AND AGAIN HE HAS PROBABLY ESCAPED... YET ONE FACT REMAINS UNCHANGED: I LOST MY FATHER LONG AGO."

"THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE SAFE, LAD. WE WERE WORRIED THAT FU MANCHU HAD SOMEHOW... WELL, THE STATEMENT IS BEST LEFT UNFINISHED."

"NOW SHALL WE TAKE OUR LEAVE OF NEW YORK?"

"NO."

POUG MOENCH / MIKE ZECK / BENJ DAY / JIM NOVAK / BOB SHARPE / JIM SALICRU / JIM SHOOTER
WRITER / ARTIST / INKER / LETTERER / COLORIST / EDITOR / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MASTER OF KUNG FU® Vol. 1, No. 80, July, 1980 issue. (U.S.P.S. 427-030) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galt, President, Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published monthly. Copyright © 1980 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 40¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate \$6.00 for 12 issues. Canada, \$6.00. Foreign, \$7.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. SHANG-CHI (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP.

"I TURN AWAY, KNOWING THAT THEY ALREADY KNOW..."

I AM NOT READY TO RETURN TO THE SPY-GAMES OF LONDON, SMITH. I WISH TO REMAIN HERE FOR A TIME.

VERY WELL, LAD. NOW THAT WE'VE SEVERED ALL TIES WITH MI-6 AND THE OTHER INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, THERE ARE A GREAT MANY CHANGES TO BE MADE BACK HOME...

INDEED, I'VE BEEN TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF SETTING UP A PRIVATE AGENCY. THUS, WHILE I CAN UNDERSTAND YOUR PRESENT NEED FOR SOLITUDE, I HOPE YOU'LL SOON REJOIN US IN SOME CAPACITY...

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN, SMITH. I'VE GROWN TIRED OF LIVING TOWARD A FUTURE ALREADY MAPPED. IT HAS CUT THROUGH TOO MANY VOYAGES THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN THE PAST...

...AND IT CONFINES THE PATH OF THE PRESENT.

"I TURN BACK, AND RESTON'S FACE IS COLD..."

WE HAVE NOT SPOKEN SINCE I STRUCK YOU RESTON. I CANNOT SAY I AM SORRY. IT IS STILL TOO SOON...

I CAN ONLY SAY GOODBYE.

YEAH, SURE, CHI. SEND ME A POST CARD.

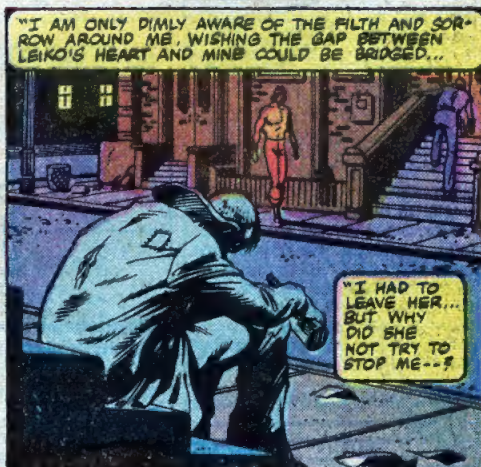
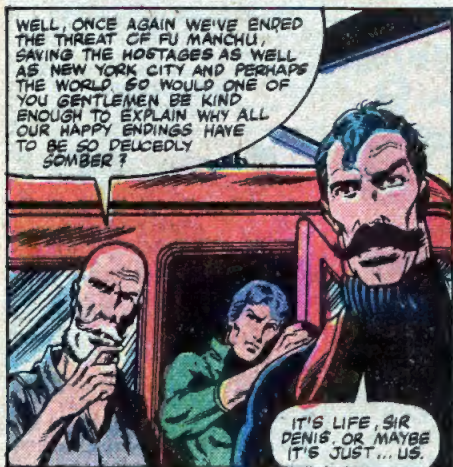
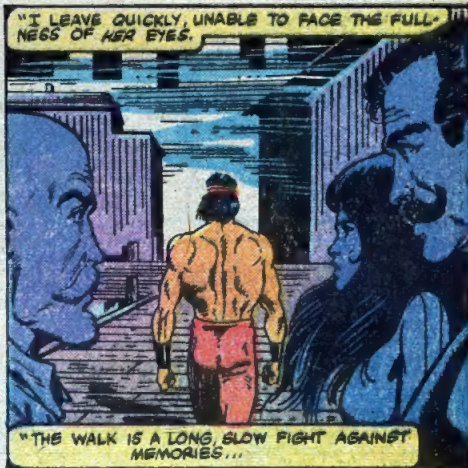
YOUR WOMAN, ANNA WAS IN THE PAST, TARR. TREASURE THE MEMORY OF WHAT SHE ONCE WAS, BUT FIND YOUR OWN FUTURE...

...AND BE NOT HAUNTED BY THE GHOST OF WHAT SHE BECAME

"...AND HIS TOUGH SHELL CRUMBLES.

GOD LOVE YA, CHINAMAN... AND STAY GOOD. THERE AIN'T MANY LIKE YA.

"TARR'S EYES GUSTEN..."



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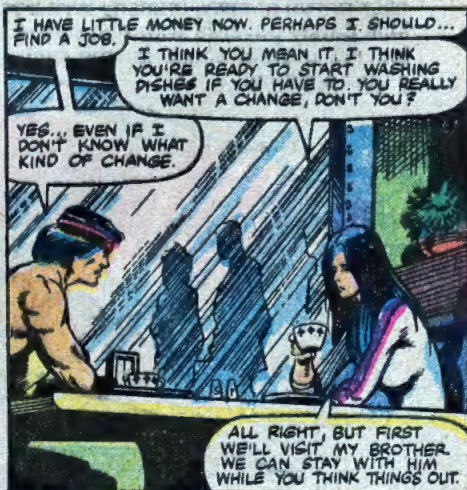
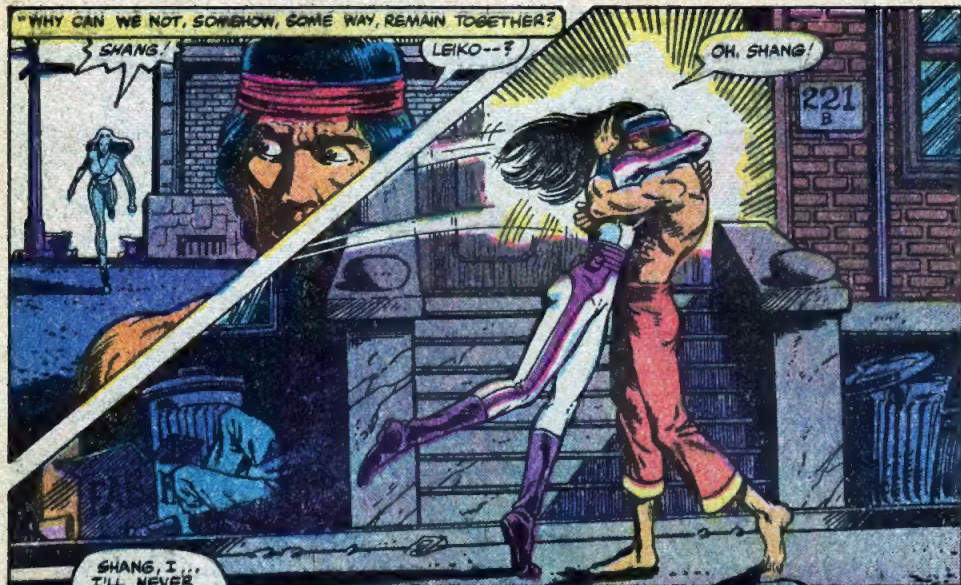
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YOUR BROTHER LIVES IN NEW YORK?

TEMPORARILY, YOU SEE, DAVID DECIDED TO FOLLOW IN OUR FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS.

AND YOUR FATHER WAS A DIPLOMAT...

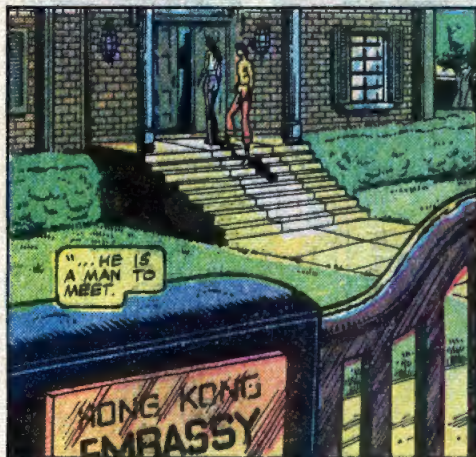


HONG KONG CULTURAL ATTACHE-- AND SOMETIME SPY FOR THE CROWN-- STATIONED IN LONDON. DAVID SERVES MUCH THE SAME FUNCTION HERE IN AMERICA.



HE'S EVEN SEATED IN THE U.N. BUT DON'T WORRY-- HE'S OMITTED THE SPY ANGLE. IF ANYTHING, HE DESPISES "GAMES OF DECEIT AND DEATH" EVEN MORE THAN YOU DO.

"THEN, I THINK..."



"...HE IS A MAN TO MEET."

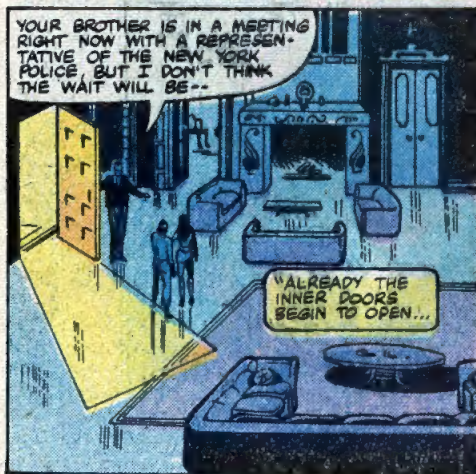
HONG KONG EMBASSY



MISS WU! IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG! BUT DAVID DID NOT MENTION--

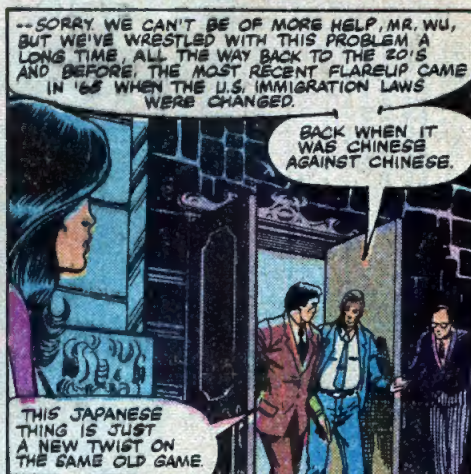
IT'S A SURPRISE, DEE.

I SEE-- AND A WONDERFUL SURPRISE. COME IN, PLEASE.



YOUR BROTHER IS IN A MEETING RIGHT NOW WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NEW YORK POLICE, BUT I DON'T THINK THE WAIT WILL BE--

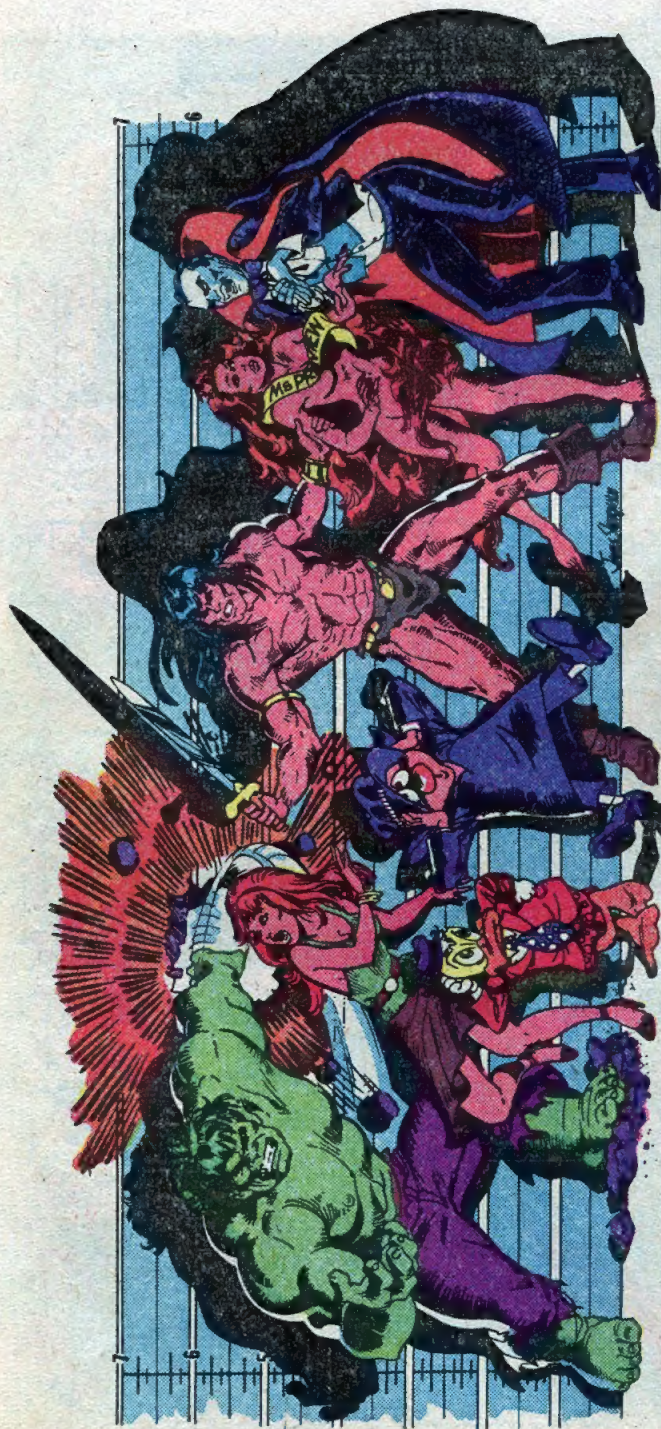
"ALREADY THE INNER DOORS BEGIN TO OPEN..."



-- SORRY WE CAN'T BE OF MORE HELP, MR. WU, BUT WE'VE WRESTLED WITH THIS PROBLEM A LONG TIME, ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE '30'S AND BEFORE. THE MOST RECENT FLAREUP CAME IN '68 WHEN THE U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS WERE CHANGED.

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I SEE. VERY WELL. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, SERGEANT. DEE WILL SHOW YOU OUT.



LEIKO-- SISTER!



YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL, LEIKO-- BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN LONDON, WITH BRITISH INTELLIGENCE OR WHAT-- EVER IT IS CALLED THESE DAYS.

MI-6-- BUT I'VE QUIT THE SERVICE, DAVID-- DECIDED TO SPEND SOME TIME IN NEW YORK BEFORE MAKING MY NEXT MOVE.

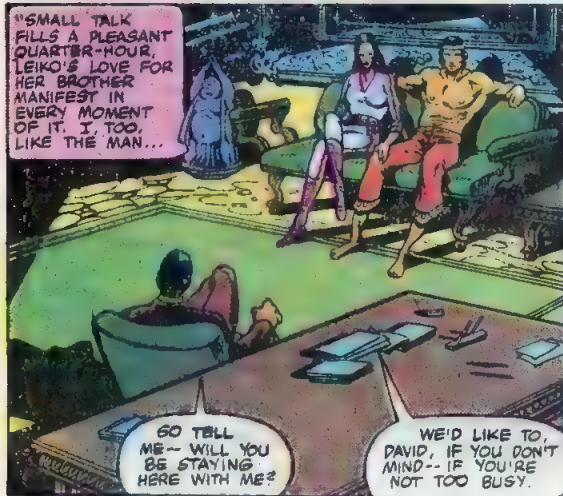


THIS IS MY FRIEND, SHANG-CHI.

PLEASUED TO MEET YOU. COME INTO MY OFFICE-- DEE WILL BRING US TEA AND COFFEE.



"SMALL TALK FILLS A PLEASANT QUARTER-HOUR, LEIKO'S LOVE FOR HER BROTHER MANIFEST IN EVERY MOMENT OF IT. I, TOO, LIKE THE MAN..."



SO TELL ME-- WILL YOU BE STAYING HERE WITH ME?

WE'D LIKE TO, DAVID, IF YOU DON'T MIND-- IF YOU'RE NOT TOO BUSY.

NO, MY DUTIES AT THE U.N. ARE FINISHED UNTIL THE NEXT SESSION. JUST ROUTINE BUSINESS FOR NOW.

YOUR DISCUSSION WITH THE POLICE DIDN'T SOUND ROUTINE. WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT.



GANG VIOLENCE. IT'S EVEN WORSE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

THESE ARE LETTERS FROM THE CHINESE COMMUNITY. TECHNICALLY IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT THE POLICE ARE SO INEFFECTUAL... THEN AGAIN, THAT'S PARTLY THE RESULT OF THE COMMUNITY ITSELF UPHOLDING ONE'S HERITAGE IS FINE--

--BUT THEY ARE TOO INSULAR, TOO SECRETIVE.

THEY LOOK UPON THE POLICE AS OUTSIDERS--AND WHEN THE POLICE CANNOT, AS A RESULT, GET CLOSE TO THE PROBLEM... WELL, THEN THE COMMUNITY'S DISTRUST IS SELF-FULFILLED

SO THE PEOPLE TURN TO ME.

AND SINCE YOU FEEL IT IS NOT YOUR PLACE TO INTERFERE, YOU TURN IT BACK TO THE POLICE...

YES, A VICIOUS CIRCLE, I SUPPOSE, BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

I THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER, DAVID...

...AND I SUSPECT YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE MATTER HAS NOT ENDED.

NO, I SUPPOSE NOT. PART OF MY FUNCTION IS TO SERVE AS A CULTURAL ATTACHE... AND IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT ONE OF CULTURE, THEN IT IS NOTHING.

WHY DO YOU SAY IT IS ONE OF CULTURE?

BECAUSE IT PINPOINTS THE DIFFICULTY OF ONE CULTURE SURVIVING IN THE MIST OF ANOTHER--ONE TRANSPLANTED TO ANOTHER...

BUT INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON THE TRUE CONFRONTATION--CHINESE AND AMERICANS--THE PROBLEM FOLDS IN UPON ITSELF UNTIL CHINESE CONFRONT CHINESE.

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THE ROOTS OF IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE TONG WARS OF FIFTY YEARS AGO.

THEN, IN 1965, WHEN IMMIGRATION PERMITTED THE ENTRY OF YOUTH FROM THE HONG KONG GHETTOS, THE ABC-- AMERICAN BORN CHINESE-- REGENTED THE FOB OR FRESH OFF THE BOAT CHINESE. THERE WAS RIVALRY FOR PROTECTION MONEY, DRUG TRAFFIC, AND SO ON.

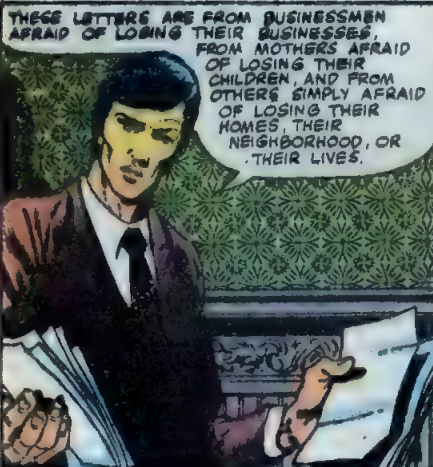
NOW, HOWEVER, THAT PARTICULAR RIVALRY HAS LARGELY QUELLED, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, AND A NEW CONFRONTATION HAS DEVELOPED-- BETWEEN CHINESE AND JAPANESE.



THE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE CHANGING. PREVIOUS VIOLENCE BETWEEN THE ABC AND FOB FACTIONS HAS GREATLY AFFECTED TOURIST TRADE AND HAS DRIVEN MANY OLDER CHINESE OUT OF CHINATOWN AND THE SURROUNDING AREA.

THE JAPANESE STARTED MOVING IN AND A NEW RIVALRY DEVELOPED.

THE MAIN STRIFE SEEMS TO EXIST BETWEEN TWO LARGE GANES-- THE JOY BOYS, WHO ARE ABC CHINESE, AND THE GOLDEN CLAWS, A GROUP OF "BUDDHA-HEADS", OR JAPANESE WHO ARE ALSO AMERICAN BORN.



THESE LETTERS ARE FROM BUSINESSMEN AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR BUSINESSES, FROM MOTHERS AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR CHILDREN, AND FROM OTHERS SIMPLY AFRAID OF LOSING THEIR HOMES, THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD, OR THEIR LIVES.

AND YOU CANNOT TURN AWAY FROM THEM.

NO, I CAN'T.

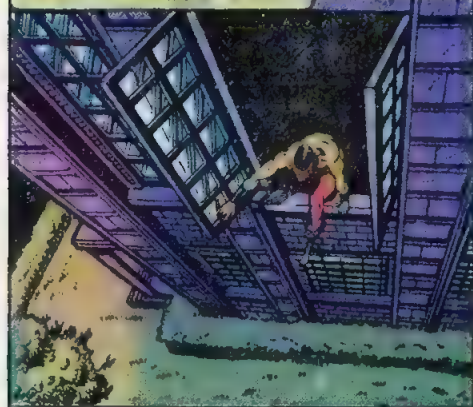
WHAT WILL YOU DO?

I REALLY DON'T KNOW... BUT THERE IS TIME ENOUGH TO CONTEMPLATE IT IN THE DAYS AHEAD. RIGHT NOW, DEE WILL SHOW YOU TO YOUR ROOMS.

DINNER IS SERVED AT EIGHT.



"DINNER WAS GOOD BUT DISTURBING, THE FLAVOR EXCELLENT. THE MOOD SPOILED.



"THREE MORE HAVE SINCE DIED, ALL GANG MEMBERS. OFTEN THE AIM OF VIOLENCE IS TRUE, BUT MISGUIDED NONETHELESS.



"NIGHT! LEIKO SLEEPS.

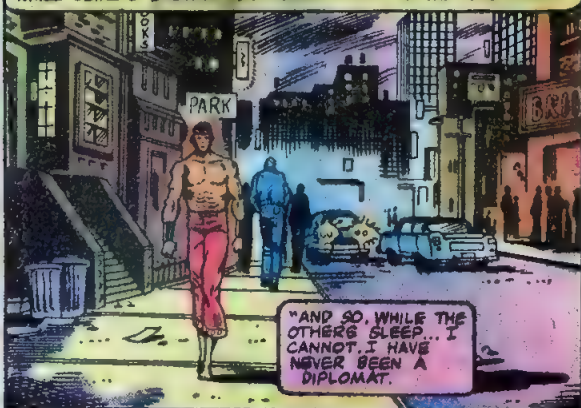


"I CANNOT.

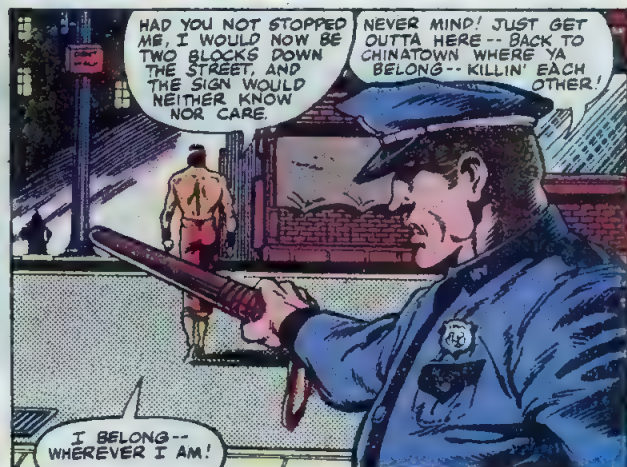
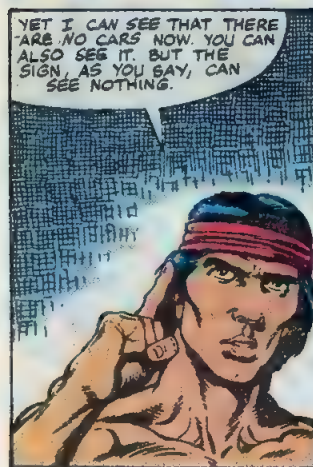
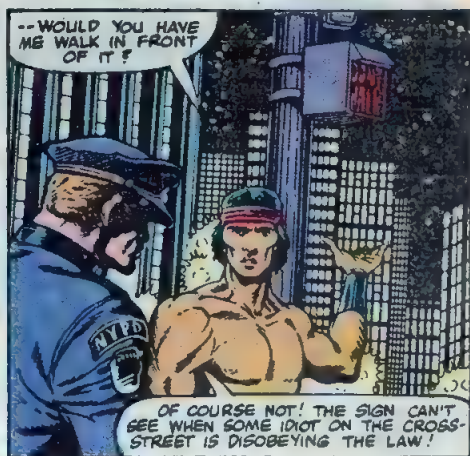
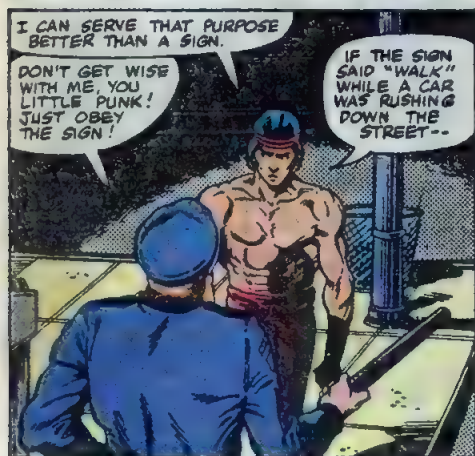
"THE CONVERSATION REVEALED THAT FOUR INNOCENT PEOPLE WERE SHOT IN A CHINATOWN RESTAURANT LAST WEEK, ALL VICTIMS OF MISGUIDED GANG VIOLENCE.

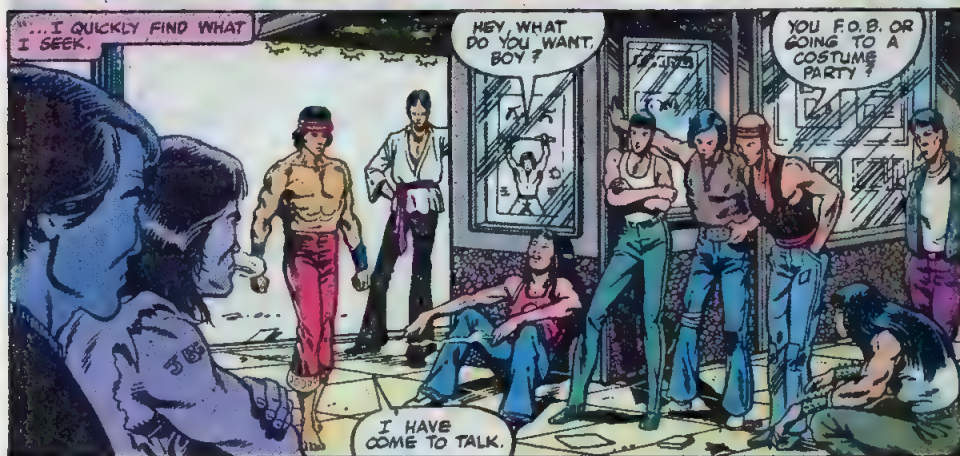
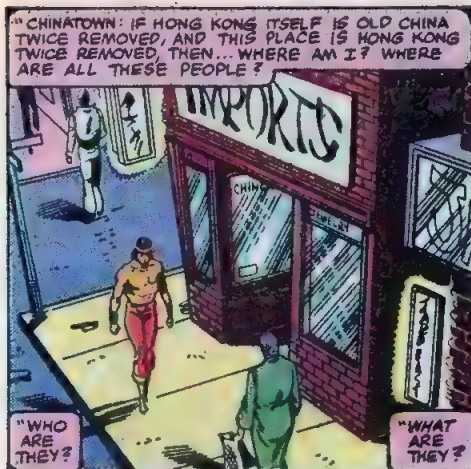


"DAVID IS A GOOD MAN WHO MEANS WELL... BUT MORE WILL DIE, PERHAPS TRUE TARGETS, PERHAPS HERE BYSTANDERS... WHILE LEIKO'S BROTHER CONTEMPLATES IT IN THE DAYS AHEAD.



"AND SO, WHILE THE OTHERS SLEEP... I CANNOT. I HAVE NEVER BEEN A DIPLOMAT.





HE STRIKES
FROM OUTER
SPACE...

...CLEAVING
THROUGH THE SKY
LIKE A FIERY
SWORD OF JUSTICE...

...HURTLING
EARTHWARD
ON HIS DREAD
MISSION OF
COSMIC
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AND NOTHING CAN STOP HIM!!

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BEFORE HE
FINDS YOU!

"THEY WOULD LEAD ME INTO DARKNESS. IT COULD BE A TRAP. IT COULD BE TROUBLE. BUT I KNEW THAT WHEN I LEFT THE EMBASSY..."



COME ON, FANCY-PANTS-- YOU COMIN'?

"HAD I WISHED TO AVOID TROUBLE, I COULD HAVE FORCED MYSELF TO SLEEP. AND SO, I FOLLOW..."



"...UNTIL, WATCHED BY CATS AND RATS, THE EIGHT YOUTHS CIRCLE ME..."



NOW... SINCE WE'RE THE JOY BOYS...

... YOU WON'T MIND IF WE--

-- HAVE THE FIRST WORD OF THIS TALK...



AGH-H! MY HAND--!



I SAID I WANTED TO TALK, NOT FIGHT!

HELP ME! DON'T JUST STAND THERE! GET HIM!



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DOOM!

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LOVE THOSE WHACKED-
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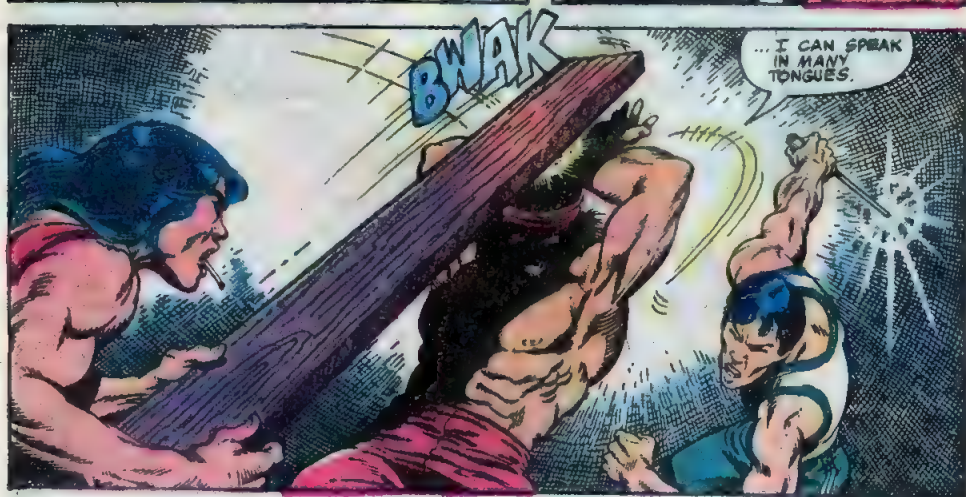
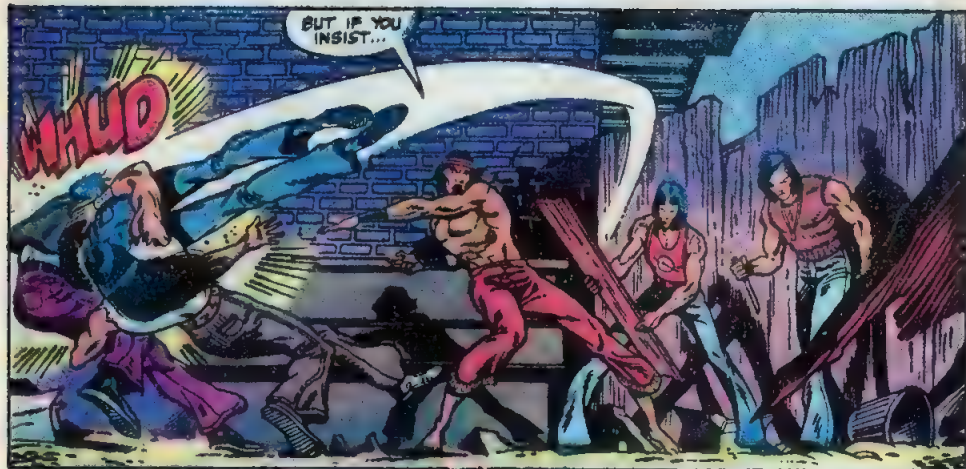
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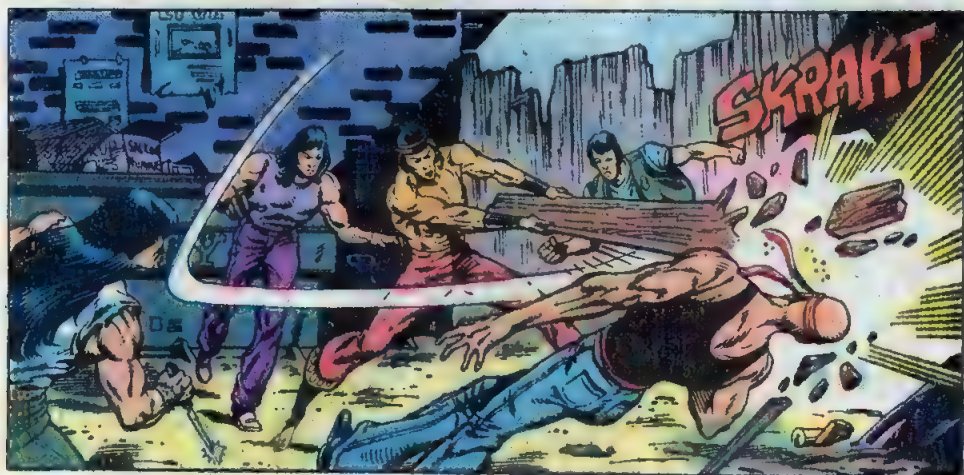
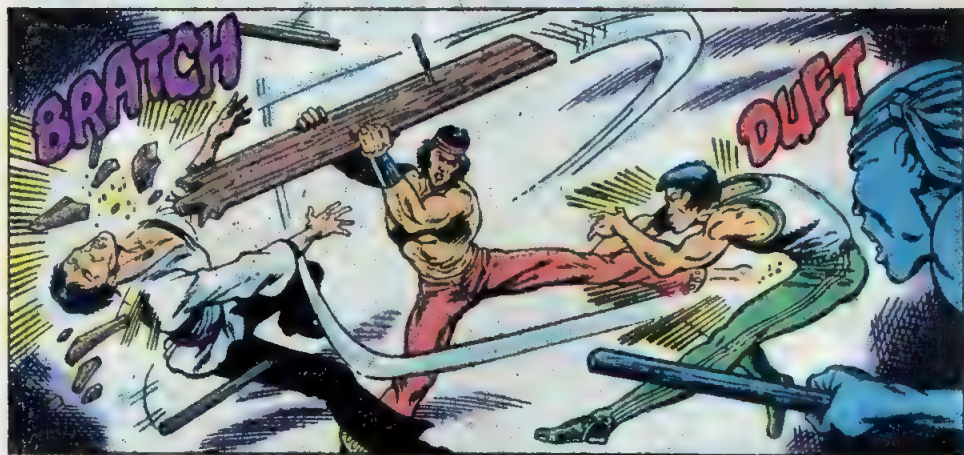
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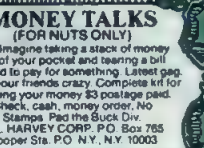
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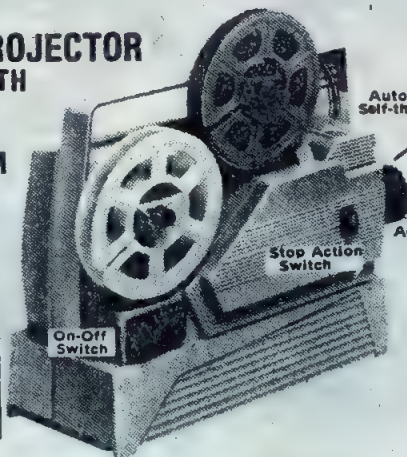
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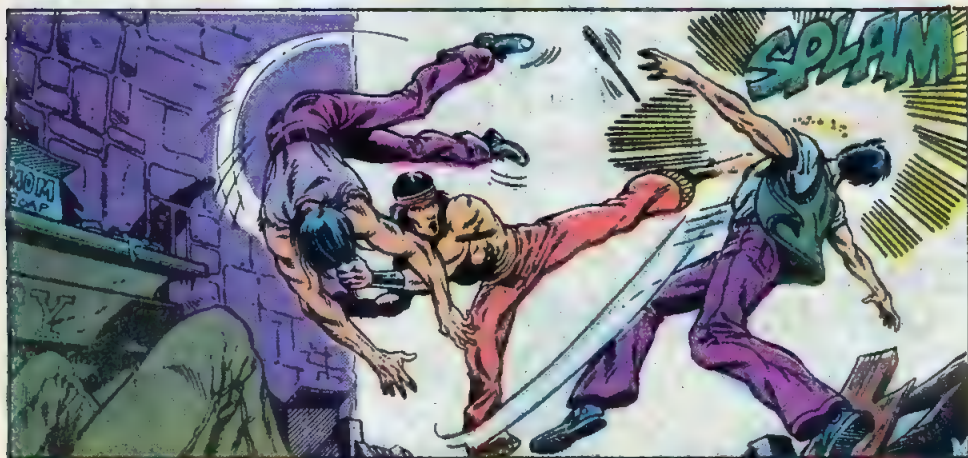
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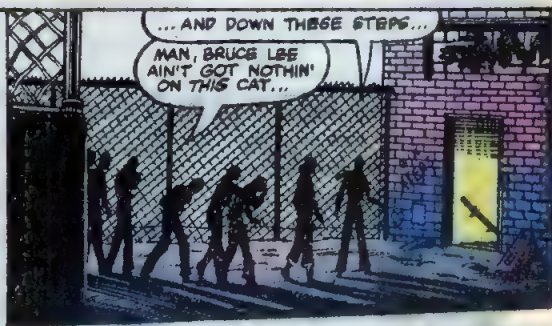
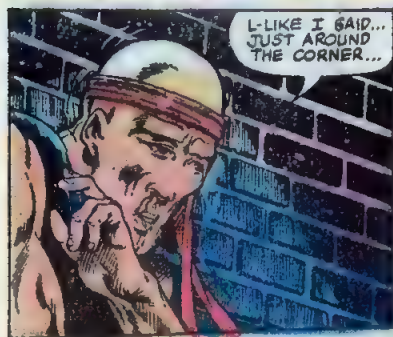
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STAN'S SOAPBOX

Well, gang, by now all of Marvel-dom has had a chance to latch onto our latest and probably greatest production, the long-awaited EPIC ILLUSTRATED. The final sales figures aren't yet complete, but from all the preliminary reports it looks as though EPIC will be the biggest sellout sensation of the decade! If the amount of mail we've received is any indication, it seems that your excitement and enthusiasm will make EPIC the biggest thing since Galactus! And there's one other factor that convinces me that EPIC is something truly special — the guys and gals in the business themselves, the artists, writers, editors, letterers, colorists, and production people — the ones who work on magazines day in and day out, the ones who've seen it all and done it all — they happen to be our very big-

gest boosters! They seem to be as thrilled with EPIC as anyone!

Now don't go figuring that this is just another sales pitch, another howlin' example of Lee's typical high-pressure hype, 'cause it isn't! I'm not selling a thing today — in fact, we haven't any left to sell! The ever-passionate, pantlin' public has already bought out every copy it could get its hands on. I'm just writing these lovable little lines 'cause I thought you'd like to know what's happening with the magazine to which you've given such a fantastic, rousing reception. It looks like you've made EPIC ILLUSTRATED a roaring success, and the whole blushin' Bulpen joins me in saying, "Thanks a heap — you're heroes all!"

Excelsior!

Stan

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST!

- ☐ **MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #65** — The Thing and Triton vs. the Serpent Squad in a race to retrieve the Serpent Crown.
- ☐ **SHOGUN WARRIORS #16** — The Shoguns in an all-out battle against the Alien attack on Earth!
- ☐ **SPIDER-WOMAN #28** — To save Scotty's life, Spider-Woman must ally herself with the Enforcer.
- ☐ **STAR TREK #4** — "The Haunted House of Space!"
- ☐ **SPIDEY SUPER STORIES #47** — Mighty Marvel and the Electric Company bring you more exciting, easy-to-read tales of the web-slinger!
- ☐ **DAREDEVIL #166** — DD faces Spider-Man's deadliest foe... Doctor Octopus!
- ☐ **MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #69** — "Many Foes Has the Hulk!"... and the Leader turns them all against of Greenskin! A Hulk classic.
- ☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #206** — Jonah Jameson's terrible secret!
- ☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #247** — "The Return of Baron Strucker!"
- ☐ **THOR #297** — Thor's quest for the Ring of Power continues!
- ☐ **MICRONAUTS #19** — The Micronauts face Odd John, the mutant-insect master!
- ☐ **DAZZLER #1** — Because you demanded it — Daz in her own mag! Guest-starring Spider-Man, the X-Men, and the Avengers.
- ☐ **GHOST RIDER #45** — Johnny Blaze must meet a challenge to his title as the world's greatest cyclist!
- ☐ **BATTLESTAR GALACTICA #17** — "Forbidden Fruit!" What it can do to a man will make your skin crawl!
- ☐ **Savage SHE-HULK #6** — She-Hulk takes on the invincible Iron Man!
- ☐ **MARVEL FUN AND GAMES #11** — All new brain twisters to tickle your fancy.
- ☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #249** — The man-brute in battle against Jack Frost. Art by sturdy Steve Ditko.
- ☐ **AVENGERS #197** — A new menace stalks the unsuspecting Avengers. And don't miss the most shocking surprise of all!
- ☐ **CONAN #112** — Conan lays siege to the City of the Bear God!
- ☐ **MARVEL TALES #117** — One of Spidey's greatest hits: Showdown with the Grizzly.
- ☐ **MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS #90** — Re-presenting the Fantastic Four's epic struggle to free Reed from the Negative Zone!
- ☐ **X-MEN #135** — Can even the X-Men stop an all-powerful Phoenix-turned-evil?
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- ☐ **ROM #8** — ROM's most powerful weapon falls into the hands of the deadly Dire Wraith!
- ☐ **STAR WARS #37** — Luke fights a death-duel with Darth Vader!
- ☐ **MASTER OF KUNG FU #90** — Shang-Chi rumbles with a vicious street-gang in New York's Chinatown!

- ☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #220** — Canada's favorite son, John Byrne writes and draws this titanic tale of the FF in mortal combat with invading Aliens in — where else? — Canada!
- ☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP #95** — Meet the awesomely acrobatic Mock-Ingbird. Is she Spider-Man's friend — or deadly enemy?
- ☐ **IRON MAN #136** — Wait! If you see the new villain Shell-head tangles with in merry of England. He'll send a chill up your spine!
- ☐ **SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #44** — Someone is killing New York's top mobsters. All Spidey's gotta find out is, who's doing it — and why!
- ☐ **DEFENDERS #85** — The Black Panther joins the Defenders to take on the Mandrill's minions!
- ☐ **MARVEL SUPER ACTION #21** — Yellowjacket's secret revealed! The best from Marvel's past.
- ☐ **AMAZING ADVENTURES #5** — Re-printing our finest. Disaster strikes the X-men as they battle the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.
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- ☐ **MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #7** — Star-Lord arrives on a strange planet called... Heaven!
- ☐ **MARVEL TREASURY #26: THE RAMPAGING HULK** — The Green Goliath in action against the Harpy, the Bi-Beast, Mook, and the whole blamed world in general. Bonus: a new Wolverine-Hercules team-up!

MARVEL MAGAZINES

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- ☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #63** — The Barbarian on a quest to retrieve his own stolen soul!
- ☐ **TOMB OF DRACULA #5** — Dracula unleashes his wrath upon the renegade vampires! Then, a terrifying new regular feature: *Lilith, Daughter of Dracula!*
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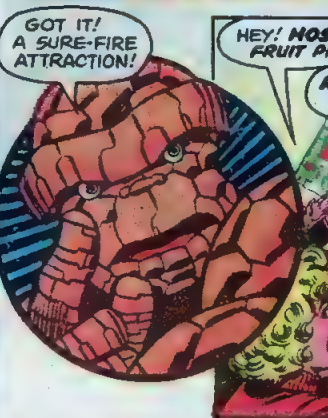
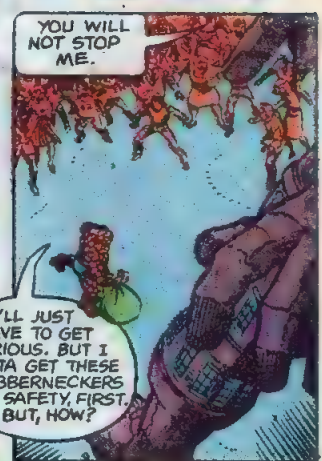
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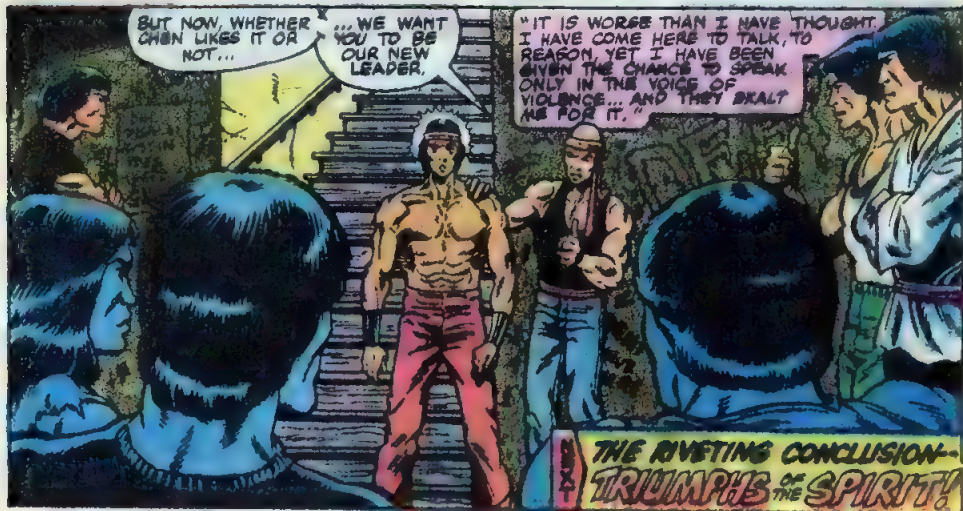
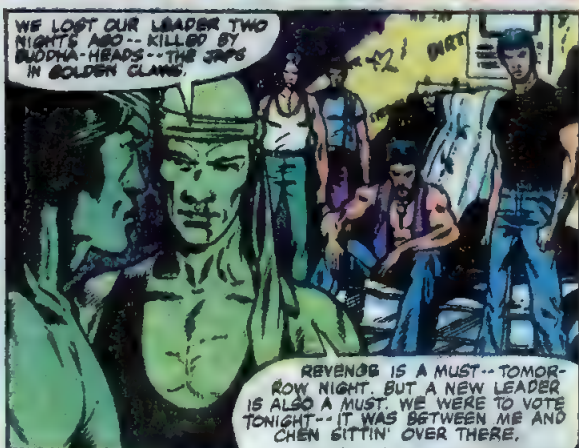
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Kung Fu Folks,

Before I say anything else about MASTER OF KUNG FU #80, I must take a moment to compliment Mike Zeck and Gene Day on their fine cover introducing Doug Moench's smoothly intricate "Pride of Leopards." I realize it's becoming commonplace to describe a favorite piece as "the best work to date," but in this case it can't be helped; I honestly feel that this cover is the single best illustration Zeck has thus far produced. It's the sort of grabber that seems assured of getting the casual rack-peruser's attention, and as a long-time reader I assure you that it's a splendid representation of Shang-Chi and the dangerous world in which he moves. The interior artwork was nothing to sneeze at either, mind you, but MOKF #80's stunning cover truly deserves to be singled out for special attention.

It would have been a crushing disappointment to turn that great cover and find that the story itself was a letdown, but fortunately Doug wasn't about to let anybody down. The early scenes at the castle in Scotland were handled so skillfully that they simultaneously brought new readers up to date, introduced important new elements in the continuing drama, and offered fresh insight into Shang-Chi's attitudes. These sequences — especially the one that brought them around the dinner table for speculation which may or may not have pinpointed the solution to the mystery infesting MI-6, but which certainly demonstrated how complex Doug's overall plot has become — were uncannily "right" in both look and feel and in terms of what they had to convey. Shang-Chi is uncomfortable with his current lot in life, but realizes there's no getting around what must be done, just as Nayland Smith knows that this talk about his methods not being all that different from Fu Manchu's is just the sort of thing Fu would like to encourage — indecisiveness due to self-doubt being the one thing those who would challenge him cannot afford.

The latter portion of #80 was just as action-packed as the first part was actionless. The slam-bang car chase featuring Tarr was tense and exciting, and the battle between Shang-Chi and his father's leopard-skinned assassins had a nervous energy all its own. The timing was particularly laudable in the former, Tarr's predicament leaving me almost breathless. And while Shang-Chi's tunnel fight with the assassins may have ended a bit too soon, the ending — leaving the impression that Chi and company were making off not with Leeks but with one of the killers — was as fine a foreshadowing of things to come as we've seen lately. I can't wait till next time.

Ed Via
1648 Dean Rd.
Roanoke, VA 24018

Friends,

For some time, MOKF has been leaving me frustrated — not because it isn't interesting, but because its full promise has not been fulfilled. Issue #76, however, was at least a touch of the former glory, the best issue since Gulacy left, or at least since the Dr. Doom two-parter. It's the first in that many issues that I've reread at once, which used to be a reflex action. I had even reluctantly concluded that X-MEN had become the best title Marvel was putting out.

Now, with the revival of important themes in Shang-Chi's life, I am once again breathlessly awaiting the continuation next month — left with the sense that the story is going somewhere instead of running on the spot. Shang-Chi's search for a father is fascinating and, I hope, indicates a return of Fu Manchu in the near future. The series needs him, not just for plot and continuity, but as an integral component of Shang-Chi's rising and advancing. His love/hate confusion regarding the doctor is about due for some personal contact, rather than mere surrogates — although the old man in this issue worked well on another level: The familiar scene of Shang-Chi being betrayed by those who should help him on his path.

The knottier question of Shang-Chi's pacifism interests me less, largely because it necessarily smacks of phoniness. Obviously, you cannot call the comics "Master of Meditation." Were Shang-Chi truly pacifist, he would have been killed back in his first appearance — or, surviving that, taken refuge in a monastery. Faced long ago with the

decision, he chose the active path of opposing evil in spite of the physical and spiritual dangers. (Remember when Smith showed him the drug addicts?) What he is doing now is coping with the decision — not easy. Neither is life and Shang-Chi is mature enough to accept it, surely, without whining. Is he being hardened by the process? I think so. The growing anger is apparent, as with his "trivial act" this issue of flinging the money at the old man. Typical of Shang-Chi to feel exaggerated remorse afterward. I suspect this toughening process is a part of his growth which will continue for some time, until a crisis point arrives, probably associated with his father.

The atmosphere in "Smoke, Beads, and Blood" also had welcome depth. The alternation of closeups and longshots, the details (such as the face of the man at the bar on page 3, caught up in Shang-Chi's affairs without understanding them), the juxtaposition of the gothic Scottish scenes with the rough Malay Jack wharfside scenes and the soft domesticity of the flat in Soho; light, darkness, and shadow — all this made the art as a whole better than I have seen for a long time. This comic has a feel of its own. Bead curtains, the cat, the symbols, the nostalgic fight on the dock, the self-searching and the verbal wisdom and the romantic wistfulness are all a part of it.

Best of all was the last panel. I always like the symbolic group scenes, reminding us of old friends and enemies. Yin, yang, and a hint of menace. "We will do what we must... it was ever so." Superb.

Elizabeth Holden
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Doug,

I know it's a little late to ask but I'm going nuts. What happened with Leiko and Lerner's lover Jennie in #49? Are you going to give us some of Leiko's past? I know it's hard for you to go into a woman's soul but please try, because you're the best, and ever since Gamora died there have been no real women in Marvel.

P.S. How do you pronounce your name?

Diana Gibson
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Thanks, one and all — to Ed for this typically exhaustive critique; to Elizabeth for her sinuous philosophical proings; and to Diana for wondering how to pronounce Doug's name. (It's "dug." Diana, accent on the only syllable.)

Seriously, Ms. Gibson, yes — we will be delving deeper into Leiko's past, and indeed have already done so in recent issues. Watch for more of the same in future issues — because, in spite of the difficulty, Doug can imagine no lovelier place to spend his time than within a woman's soul.

Next issue should be nifty, if it goes well. And if you want to check us out, we'll see you then.

(Oops — we almost left Diana dangling on the tense, and since we wouldn't want to do that: The last moniker rhymes with "wench.")

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